

VZCZCXRO3923
OO RUEHBC RUEHDBU RUEHDE RUEHKUK RUEHLH RUEHMOS RUEHPW
DE RUEHNE #2788/01 1151327
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 251327Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2958
INFO RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1611
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 4866
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 4895
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 7857
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2745
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 5556
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 9507
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 7990
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 3139
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA 3348
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 3237
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 3495
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 2456
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 2511
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 3113
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0332
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 2588
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHMFISS/HQ USSOCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NEW DELHI 002788

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/25/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [IN](#)
SUBJECT: JAMMU & KASHMIR ASSEMBLY BY-ELECTIONS EXCEED
EXPECTATIONS

REF: A. 2004 NEW DELHI 2410

- [1](#)B. NEW DELHI 2365
- [1](#)C. 2004 NEW DELHI 2351
- [1](#)D. 2002 NEW DELHI 5330
- [1](#)E. 2002 NEW DELHI 5509

NEW DELHI 00002788 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: CDA Robert Blake, Jr. for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Residents of four of Jammu & Kashmir's Assembly constituencies came out in strength to vote in by-elections on April 24, undaunted by threats and violence in the third major exercise of electoral democracy in the state since 2002. Another data point in the trend of Kashmiris' growing efforts to secure normalcy and prosperity, the highest voter turnout in 16 years--estimated at around 60 percent--indicates that residents were not intimidated by pre-poll threats from terrorists, nor were they deterred by separatists' call for an election boycott. Notably, locals attributed the limited violence that did take place to "election criminality," rather than terrorism. Local press reports and Embassy observers commented that voters were motivated by local issues, such as education and development, rather than broader questions such as the India-Pakistan relationship. End Summary.

High Voter Turnout Reflects Electoral Excitement

[1](#)2. (SBU) Indian press outlets are reporting that voters

largely ignored a call by separatists to boycott the polls for the four Jammu & Kashmir Assembly seats being contested on April 24. Total turnout reached about 60 percent -- well above the 35 percent turnout for Lok Sabha elections in 2004 and the 42 percent turnout for Legislative Assembly elections in 2002 (REF A) -- confirming the sense of excitement that Poloff and Pol FSN observed during their visits to 11 polling stations. On April 25, Jammu & Kashmir's Chief Electoral Officer announced the following turnout figures for each of the constituencies: Bhaderwah - 72 percent; Rafiabad - 66.2 percent; Pattan - 56.2 percent; Sangrama - 40.3 percent. Despite a slow start at some polling places, Poloff and Pol FSN witnessed queues several hundred people deep at several locations by the afternoon. Extrapolating out their observations, the government's overall turnout figure is consistent with what Poloff and Pol FSN saw. As they traveled, Poloff and Pol FSN were greeted by voters proudly holding up their inked fingers to show that they had exercised their franchise. At one polling station in Sangrama, Poloff noted that a group of about 50 stood without blocking the voting booths, and said within range of the security forces that they were boycotting the election. The only note-worthy impact of the separatists' boycott call appeared to be the large-scale shuttering of shops near Sopore and the more limited number of closed stores in Pattan; it was business as usual in most other places, again in contrast to the 2004 elections.

Importance of Local Issues Outweighs Boycott Calls

13. (C) Voters told Poloff and Pol FSN that they were voting based on local issues, including education and development, rather than on the basis of Indo-Pakistani relations, on which separatist leaders have focused (REF B). Press reports

NEW DELHI 00002788 002.4 OF 003

NEW DELHI 00002788 003.4 OF 003